

Jackson School
R Street and Avon Place, N.W.
Washington (Georgetown)
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-244

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

JACKSON SCHOOL

Location: R Street (formerly Road Street) between
30th and 31st Streets, southwest corner of
intersection of R Street and Avon Place, N.W.
(Georgetown), Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: District of Columbia

Present Occupant: Jackson School

Present Use: Elementary School

Statement of
Significance: The design of this school is typical of several late
nineteenth-century schools in Georgetown. The
exterior is notable for its picturesque detail; the
interior, for its spacious rooms. A generally open
and expansive setting for the building is created
because it is set back from the street (as are all
the buildings along R Street) and because it is
faced by the gardens of Montrose Park.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1890.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building is located in
Square 1282 lot 840 (formerly Square 112, lot 14) in the
area known as "Cooke's Park." The following is an incomplete
chain of title to the property. The references are to the
Recorder of Deeds, Washington, D.C.

1798 Deed June 12, 1798, recorded August 24, 1798 in
Liber D folio 67

Thomas Beall et ux Nancy
to

William Craik

Part of a tract of land called the Rock of
Dumbarton including land from the north side of
Back Street to the west side of Washington Street
to Road Street and then to the beginning...
and containing 10 5/8 acres

Throughout the nineteenth century this large piece
of land was broken up and sold in smaller parcels.

HABS
DC
GEO
114-

1885 Deed September 10, 1885, recorded September 26, 1885
in Liber 1143 folio 135

Van L. Higgins and wife Lena M.
to

Alexander M. Bell

Beginning at the west side of Washington Street,
135 feet north of Stoddert, then north with
Washington Street to the south line of Road
Street, then west parallel with Road Street
658' 6", then southeast to 135' due north of
Stoddert, then east and parallel with
Stoddert...being lots 7-24 in Square 1282

1885 Deed October 2, 1885, recorded March 30, 1885
in Liber 1176 folio 29

Alexander M. Bell and wife Eliza G.
to

Leonora M. Greenless

Lot 14 in the subdivision of part of Square 1282
known as "Cooke's Park."

Consideration: \$3,200

1889 Deed May 5, 1889, recorded May 13, 1889 in
Liber 1384 folio 245

Archibald and Leonora Greenlees
to

District of Columbia

Lot 14

Consideration: \$10,000

4. Original plans and construction: The original ink drawings
for the basement and second floor plans as well as the
front and side elevations and section dated June 11, 1889,
are stored in the District of Columbia Office of Buildings
and Grounds.

5. Alterations and additions: The only alterations have
been modernization of electrical and heating facilities,
insertion of fire doors, and so on.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

1. Notes on the History of the School:

The Jackson School is named after Andrew Jackson.
It was built upon land formerly known as "Cooke's
Park", part of the estate of Henry D. Cooke,
Governor of the District under its territorial form
of government. (Biographical information on Henry D.
Cooke and more detailed descriptions of his property
holdings can be found in HABS No. DC-182.)

HABS
DC
GEO
114-

In September 1942 the District of Columbia Board of Education announced that it would not open the school that year because of the drop in enrollment from 320 to 120 students. This announcement was made only twelve days prior to the opening of school. An informal committee of Georgetown parents was formed to protest this closing and was able to convince the Board to keep the school open. (For additional information see "Board Plan Closing School is Opposed," Washington Post September 13, 1942; "Parents to Protest Today on Closing of School," Evening Star [Washington], September 16, 1942; "Continued Use of Jackson School Voted," Washington Post, September 18, 1942.)

During World War II the Georgetown Ration Board was housed at the school. (Star, September 16, 1942.)

In 1965 school enrollment again was low, having dropped to 90 students. (Originally the school was designed to hold 270.) The School Board declared the school to be "open" and in 1967 approved plans to bus in volunteering children from overcrowded schools in other areas of Washington. Present enrollment is now about 125.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: None found.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

District of Columbia Deed Books, Recorder of Deeds,
Washington, D.C.

b. Secondary and published sources:

The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.). September 16,
1942.

The Washington Post. September 13 and 18, 1942.

Prepared by Ellen J. Schwartz
Architectural Historian
Commission of Fine Arts
August 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This attractive brick school reveals the careful planning of fenestration, disposition of rooms, and circulation for efficiency and quiet that is repeated in several similar schools of Georgetown, all built in the late nineteenth century. The tower at the northwest corner not only adds to the impressive and picturesque qualities of this building, but also provides more natural light for the darkest room.
2. Condition of fabric: Both exterior and interior are in very good condition and are well maintained. On the outside some repointing on the sides is falling out. Inside there has been some repartitioning in the basement, and fire doors have been added at the first and second floor (and the inner doors at the entrances removed).

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The school is about 85' north-south by 70' east-west. The entrance doors project $2\frac{1}{2}'$ further on the sides. On the front the corner bay extends about 6', the central bay about 4', and the northeast corner about 1'. The facade is five bays wide. The building has two major floors, a basement with ground-level windows, and an attic.
2. Foundations: Brick to grade. On the rear elevation, where the grade level is much lower, the foundation is covered with concrete up to the level of the basement windows (about 6'). This is lightly scored into blocks $34\frac{1}{2}"$ by $12\frac{1}{2}"$.
3. Wall construction: The north facade is red smooth-faced brick with narrow joints of black mortar. There is a molded water table $6\frac{1}{2}'$ from grade and a two-brick string course at the level of the first-floor sills. A more elaborate belt course connects the spring line (and hood molds) of these windows, and a somewhat similar treatment is repeated for the second floor windows. Curved brick is used at the window jambs. On the sides and rear, ordinary brick is used with regular mortar except for the voussoirs of the

HABS
DC
GEO
114-

basement and first-floor windows. A wide belt course is carried around at the level of the water table of the facade, and a two-brick belt course joins the window sills on the first floor, and on the second floor. There are also vertical (structural) pilaster strips at the sides and rear every two or three windows.

Bluestone is used for the window sills; gray granite, for the door sills and the shoulder blocks which support the iron lintel over the side doorways.

4. Framing: The walls are brick load bearing. Interior walls also appear to be brick. Other framing is not visible.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: None. The rear yard, about 6' below the front grade, is reached on the east by eight bluestone steps (with a bluestone coping at the sides) and by a similar flight with brick coping on the west.
6. Chimneys: Two rectangular brick chimneys are visible on the upper slope of the roof, one toward the east side and the other toward the west. They have recessed panels on the sides and ends and a corbelled brick cap. Inside, the chimneys ascend through two of the closets. Attached to the rear of the building is a circular iron chimney rising from a concrete base at ground level. The stack is 18" in diameter, and is placed about 2' from the school wall.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main doors are at the east and west sides. They consist of two double doors (four panels and six lights each leaf) painted green, with a five-light transom above. This is all below an iron I-beam lintel with a tie bolt at its center. The ends of the lintel are solid and decorated with rosettes. The doorway, which is 10' wide, has a single gray granite sill. At the rear of the building are two double doors, each about 41' wide (six panels per leaf) with a three-light transom above--one enters the girls' room, the other the mechanical room in the southwest corner.
 - B. Windows and shutters: The basement windows are four-light casement, almost square in shape, covered by a modern metal screen. On the first floor the windows are also six-over-six sash with a three-

HABS
DC
GEO
114-

light flat headed transom. Both the basement and second-floor windows have a flat iron lintel. Sills of all windows are bluestone. In the east and west entrance projections, the windows are six-over-six without transom. There are two small attic windows in the north gable.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The two-slope hip roof has the lower slope covered with gray rectangular slate; there are projecting gables at the east, west, and north sides. The upper slope, almost flat, is not visible.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves (painted white) are supported by closely spaced three-ply brackets with incised tracery on the sides. A rain gutter is concealed above.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: At the northwest corner of the building is a projecting tower with an eight-sided conical roof covered with gray rectangular slate. Its eaves, composed of simple moldings, are about 18" above the eaves of the building proper. The roof is embellished with three dormers (on the north, east and west sides), which have round blank bull's-eyes (formerly louvered ventilators), and side strips with vertical chamfers. The finial that once capped the roof is missing. The north projecting bay has a gable with two attic windows above the cornice line, and a pressed metal bartisan (painted white) at each of the upper corners. At the ridge is a floral pressed metal acroterion, painted white.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: At the center of the first-floor plan is a rectangular hall, 15-1/2' x 29' which one enters from stairways (now closed off by fire doors) at the east and west. There are four classrooms, each about 25-1/2' x 34', located at the corners and entered from the central hall. Separating the classrooms on the north and south are long, narrow cloakrooms 7' wide. At the east and west the classrooms are separated by the stairway (12' wide) and a cloakroom. Each of the four cloakrooms is entered from its adjoining classroom and from the hall. At the northwest corner is a tower which creates a five-sided bay extending out about 6' from the corner line.

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The second-floor plan is identical to that of the first, except for a small room above the outer landing of the stairway, a few steps above the second-floor landing. This room measures about 9' x 12'. One of the cloakrooms (on the north) has doors into both the east and west classrooms; that to the west, however, was added sometime after 1925.

The basement contains the boys' toilet in the northwest corner (a room 33' x 25'), the girls' toilet in the southeast corner; a play room 18' x 31' in the northeast corner; the present furnace room and shop in the southwest corner; and storage rooms, etc. in the intervening spaces.

2. Stairways: There are two stairs located at the east and west sides; these are half-turn with landings. The stair hall is 12' wide, with metal treads 60- $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide with 7-inch metal risers (decorated with three molded panels). From the basement one ascends eleven risers to the first landing at which are entrance doors. A run of ten goes to the first floor level. The second floor is reached by runs of thirteen and thirteen, with one landing. From the second floor a short run of four wooden steps toward the outside wall leads to the small office over the outer landings. Fire doors have been in place at the first and second floors since 1925.
3. Flooring: The flooring of the central halls on both floors is 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ " hardwood. The classrooms and cloakrooms of the first floor have plastic covering which is 2" higher than the hall level. On the second floor the northeast and northwest classrooms and their two cloakrooms have wooden floors, 2- $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide, also higher than the hall flooring. The other rooms of the second floor are covered with plastic tile. The stair landings are either concrete or terrazzo. The basement is concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are painted plaster throughout, with wainscoting in most areas. The hall is painted gray to a height of about four feet (to the top of the wainscoting where it exists), and yellow above this line. In the classrooms the wood wainscoting is painted gray and the walls light green. This wainscoting is 32- $\frac{1}{2}$ " high (including upper molding), except under the windows where it extends to the height of the sill, 42". The wainscoting is composed of 3"-wide vertical-match boarding with one bead, and three additional beads carved down the center. It is similar in the cloakrooms, 34" high. In the central hall, however, it is 50" high, including a 2-inch molding.

There is no wainscoting at the fire partitions of the stair halls. Walls in the basement are brick. The ceilings of the halls and classrooms are divided off into 2-foot squares by wood strips. Ceilings are painted white.

5. Doorways and doors: Doors into the classrooms are double, each leaf 24" wide and having four panels. Above the door is a three-light transom, which extends the doorway to a height of 10'-7". The doorway (with transom) is surrounded by a 7"-wide molding. The cloakroom doors are narrower, 31"-wide single doors with seven panels and a similar three-light transom and enframingent. Doors from the cloakrooms into the classrooms are five-panel, 38" wide. The hall fire doors (double metal doors with two lights) are modern. At one corner of each classroom is a book and supplies closet which has been added; though it is made of the same boarding as the wainscoting, the wainscoting continues behind it. These closets measure 49" x 13" deep and have a double door 34" wide with three panels for each leaf. In some of the cloakrooms there are similar though somewhat larger closets, which have five-panel doors.
6. Decorative features and trim: The wainscoting described above is a main feature. In addition, the windows have a 6- $\frac{1}{2}$ "-wide molding similar to the doors. The original toilet cubicles in the basement are still in place in both the boys' and girls' rooms. The cubicles in the girls' room are numbered with oval metal plaques, 1-9; in the boys' room, 10-16, with the 17th unnumbered. The toilet doors have fixed-louver upper panels, and two solid panels below, with a chamfered strip between cubicles.
7. Notable hardware: Most of the doors have their original embossed metal knobs and keyhole plates. In the cloakrooms are double rows of coat hooks, some of which appear to be original. Many transom locks of embossed metal and many metal window pulls are still in place. In the first-floor hall a round, metal fire gong with a pull chain and turned wooden handle may be original. Nearby is a modern fire department call box.

In the southeast second-floor classroom is a large wall clock which may be original. It stands 4'-8" tall, with a dark wood case 25- $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide (maximum). The upper face (18- $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter) is a clock with Roman numerals, with the days of the week on an inner radius (there is no hand to point to these, however). Below is another face (12 inches in diameter) with the numbers 1-31 around the

HABS
DC
GEO
114-

cumference, the months January to December on an inner radius, and hands to point to the day and the month. Inside the clock are two labels. One reads, "B.B. Lewis's Perpetual Calendar, Patented Feb. 4, 1862... Dec. 20, 1868. Welch, Spring and Co., Bristol, Conn., U.S.A." There are also instructions for setting the calendar. The second label behind the pendulum reads in part: "Extra Eight Day/steel pivoted rolling pinion/Perpetual Calendar/CLOCKS/both weight and spring.../Manufactured by/Welch, Spring & Co.,/Forestville, Conn., U.S.A." Below the lower face is a rectangular gilt-glass pendulum window.

8. Lighting: There are two gas butts in the ceiling of the northeast first-floor classroom. There are also a number of attractive early electric hanging fixtures with simple flower-like shades of white ribbed glass, still used in the cloakrooms. All classrooms now have modern fluorescent lighting. It should be noted, however, that the natural light from tall exterior windows with transoms is very good, and that the central hall receives considerable light from the classrooms, stairways, and cloakrooms via the transoms over the doors.
9. Heating: Original heating seems to have been hot air. On the first and second floors, in the southeast classrooms there is a round metal air regulator which reads around the edge: "Warm Air." and "Cold Air.", with arrows indicating the direction in which the central handle is to be turned. Closer to the center it reads, "Isaac S. Smead & Co.,/Toledo, Ohio." and "Smead's Patent/August 1, 1882." Nearby, in the wainscoting, is an air grille which measures 24" x 26", now closed from behind. Similar grates are found in most classrooms. Present heat is by steam radiators, installed about 1925.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Jackson School, situated on the south side of R Street at the southwest corner of Avon Place, faces north to Montrose Park.
2. Enclosures: The school has walls or fences on all sides. The 190-foot stretch on R Street has a simple wrought-iron fence with palmette-like finials every fourth bar next to the sidewalk; the posts are set in bluestone blocks. On the Avon Place side a low chain-link fence, painted black, extends about 130 feet south to an alley along which it runs west for about 45 feet until it meets the rear brick retaining wall of the school yard, which continues along the south

property line. A wall about 6- $\frac{1}{2}$ ' high, laid in common bond with header courses every nine rows and a projecting brick course near the top, runs along the west property line at an acute angle to R Street. This wall has brick piers every nine feet. A small playground on the upper level of the school building is enclosed by a wood and wire fence; on the east is a similar fence which runs to the north, plus the brick wall which runs south to the rear line.

HABS
DC
GEO
114-

3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: Concrete walks about 7' wide lead to each side door from the front walk. The playgrounds on the east and west, and the rear sunken yard, are asphalted.
5. Landscaping: Between Avon Place and the brick north-south retaining wall, the grounds are grass covered and informally planted. A similar grass strip runs along R Street between the building and the sidewalk fence--a space about 12 to 14 feet wide--which is also attractively planted.

Prepared by Daniel D. Reiff
Architectural Historian
Commission of Fine Arts
August 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made in 1969 during a project to record 14 structures and a group of 16 items of "street furniture" in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. The project was conducted by the Commission of Fine Arts with the cooperation of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The resulting documentation was donated to HABS by the Commission and published in 1970 in HABS Selections Number 10, Georgetown Architecture: Northwest Washington, District of Columbia.

The project was under the direction of Mr. Charles H. Atherton, Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer of the Commission of Fine Arts. The recording team was composed of Miss Ellen J. Schwartz and Mr. Daniel D. Reiff, Architectural Historians, and Mr. William P. Thompson, Architect. The photographs were made by photographers J. Alexander and Jack E. Boucher under contract to the Commission.